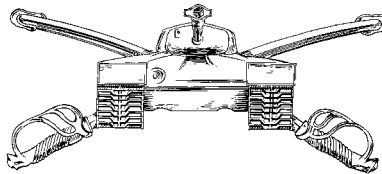




So now we will have ten divisions. And while I can intellectually grasp the economic and political rationale for the shrinkage of the force, I must admit that seeing some of those special colors furled will, in many ways, be like saying good-bye to an old friend — one who saw us through war in Europe, Korea, Vietnam, and the assorted flame-ups of the 80s and 90s. Whatever shall become of the streamers, flags, plaques, awards, and memorabilia of the units that cease to be? Will the history and heritage of illustrious fighting organizations simply fade away? Will the proud past be relegated to a dusty, little-used volume on some library shelf? I certainly hope not. For when soldiers are taught the lineage and record of their unit, they are better soldiers because they have a historical and cultural investment in that unit. Armor and Cavalry troopers tend to be a particularly nostalgic crowd, taking pride in past accomplishments and training to surpass the record in future efforts.

But the problem for the leadership in the late 90s and beyond will be one of determining which lineage to teach. The myriad of deactivations, reorganizations, and reflagging actions leaves a serpentine trail of crossed branches, blended battle histories, and competing heroes. I fear that sorting out the mess will be too much trouble for some leaders, denying soldiers a true sense of heritage in their new organizations. Such ambiguity and turbulence may constitute a small but important as-



pect of what W.D. Henderson warned us about in his 1990 book, *The Hollow Army*.

"The continual long-term decrease in soldier commitment to unit and Army values that occurs from the relative high reached by soldiers in basic training is a strong indication that the Army has not developed strong units and well-integrated, long-term soldier-leader relationships. Instead the Army has drifted into an organizational mode characterized by leadership and personnel procedures that result in nascent or turbulent organization at the troop level, which makes the development and sustainment of strong, well-led units very difficult."

I challenge leaders at all levels to recognize the importance of maintaining and teaching unit history to young soldiers. In some instances of reflagging, it will take research effort to reestablish the martial trail; but it can pay off in commitment to the unit. As some flags are cased, others will be uncased or expanded to new locations. Take the time in officer and noncommissioned officer professional development to make soldiers aware of the special entity of which they are now a part.

In the Bible, the Apostle Paul talks about being "surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses," and I somehow believe that battle-tested soldiers in Valhalla, or Fiddler's Green, or wherever, may be watching us to see what kind of stewards of history we will become.

— J.D. Brewer

By Order of the Secretary of the Army:

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